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STATEMENT BY MR.S.EDA, MEMBER OF JAPAN NATIONAL DIET, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION, ON THE QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

15 AUGUST, 1986

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I am grateful to you for permitting me to address you on the issue of East Timor. I believe that this is the first time that a Japanese who is not an official of the Foreign Ministry has addressed this committee on this urgent matter. I came here because I felt it necessary to confirm the right of self-determination of the people of East Timor, and also to suggest how their right of self-determination should be exercised at this stage of the problem.

As you have already known, the right of self-determination of the people of East Timor is based on the epoch-making General Assembly resolution 1514(XV) in 1960,the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Japanese government, to my greatest regret, however, has been encouraging distortions of the facts and misconceptions about the process of self-determination of the people of East Timor, I think. Firstly I need to breifly refer to these misconceptions, in the hope that they will not continue to work any longer.

You will remember that the Japanese Government was one of the first governments to take action at the United Nations after the invasion of East Timor on December 7, 1975. What kind action was that ? The draft resolution co-sponsored by Japan and introduced in the fourth committee immediately after the invasion, set a pattern of distortion that has been followed ever since. You will recall that under this draft the General Assembly made no mention of the Indonesian Invasion, but would have taken note that the people of East Timor were divided in their opinion with regard to their political status. But the Japanese Foreign Ministry knew the facts. For months before the invasion there was almost daily coverage in the Japanese press, much of which was based on non-Indonesian sources. The Prime Minister had access to information gathered by an independent group of Japanese parliamentarians and businessmen, the Japan-Timor Association, of which my father, a member of the House of Representatives at the time, was vice-chairperson.

The line which the Foreign Ministry took immediately after the invasion -- all but denying the fact of invasion, and casting blame on the victims -- continued to be propagated in the years afterward. In a book about the United Nations, former U.N. ambassador Saito Shizuo refers to the "success" of this Japanese lobbying, particularly among the Asian nations.

The months and years passed. The death toll from the invasion rose to catastrophic proportions. Yet year after year officials of the Japanese Foreign Ministry repeated statements before ~~this~~ the distinguished committees of U.N. which carefully avoided any suggestion that East Timor had suffered a military invasion. These officials claimed to be concerned about the suffering of the East Timorese people, claimed to be anxious to offer them humanitarian assistance. But as for the cause of their suffering, these officials insinuated, and continue to insinuate, that the East Timorese are themselves to blame. In a phrase repeated a number of times ~~before this distinguished committee~~, the Foreign Ministry claimed: " the East Timorese are the innocent victims of severe political rivalries there." This is nonsense. We all know that a massive military invasion which was launched over a decade ago and is continuing to this day, is the major cause of the suffering of the East Timorese people.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

There is another favorite phrase of Foreign Ministry officials that I would like to draw your attention to. That is the statement that " Indonesia is effectively governing the territory of East Timor." This phrase, repeated as recently as four months ago in response to questioning in the Japanese Diet, is extremely vague and misleading, according to my humble opinion. What does " effectively governing " mean ?

Does it mean that the occupying power has effectively disrupted the time-honored and unique way of life of the people of East Timor and is now effectively coercing them into adopting a culture, language and life-style that is alien to them ? Does it mean that the occupying power has effectively blanketed the territory with its troops in order to control the every movement of the population ? A letter from East Timor received in March by the former Apostolic Administrator Monsignor Lopes, tells of a cruel system of nightly patrols in

which undernourished, exhausted peasants are forced to keep watch outdoors throughout the night in the villages and concentration camps of East Timor. It tells of peasants being shot to death for wandering a few meters beyond the boundaries of the concentration camps. Is this, perhaps, what is meant by " effective governing " ?

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I draw your attention to this phrase not only because I believe that it is misleading, but also because it represents a dangerous trend that we should be aware of. The implication of this phrase is to suggest that the takeover should be granted as a fact, however illegal it might be, because of some pragmatic reasons. Even the Japanese Foreign Ministry spends some words to the principle of self-determination But for them the practical consideration is more important, I suppose.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It is not an extreme exaggeration to say that now in Japan there exist loud cries against these distortions and misconceptions. This year, in the two Diet committees, one on National Budget and the other on Foreign Affairs, my colleagues took questioning on the East Timor. Written Inquiries were presented to the Government as well. The activities of the citizen's groups have become more active recently. I would like to express our firm resolution to continue the efforts in our country to correct these distortions and misconceptions.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Secondly, I would like to deliver my opinion about what should be done in order to realize the achievement of self-determination of the people of East Timor at this stage of the problem.

No matter how distressing the reports from East Timor are, and how discouraging actions of governments like Japan have been, still I am encouraged by several things. Last year, before the General Assembly, Foreign Minister Gama and the President Eanes reaffirmed Portugal's commitment to work to bring about the achievement of self-determination in its former colony of East Timor.

I am encouraged by the message addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations last year by Mr. Gusmao Xanana, leader of Fretilin. Mr.Xanana stated that Fretilin recognizes Indonesia's

legitimate concerns about its security and is ready to take them into consideration in any negotiated settlement of the East Timor issue.

I am also encouraged by the fact that Indonesia has responded to the invitation of the Secretary-General to sit down to discuss the East Timor issue. I really appreciate the great efforts and leaderships exercised by the Secretary-General up to this moment and what has been achieved in those discussions.

However, as you know, the party in this conflict most deeply concerned, the East Timorese, have yet to be included in these discussions. Concern over this situation motivated myself and 74 other members of the Japanese Diet to submit a letter on this urgent issue to Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar this past April. To myself and to my colleagues the inclusion of represetatives of the East Timorese, notably Fretilin, in these discussions at the earliest possible moment is of utmost concern.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

What do we need to insure that the dialogue that has begun is continued to get to the central issue of self-determination? I believe that this committee and other United Nations committees should continue to focus attention on the issue of East Timor steadily. At this juncture more, not less, exposure of the facts is called for. In this regard, I am extremely disturbed by the fact that the Japanese Government used its vote in the Human Rights Commission to silence discussion of the East Timor issue. Here again I affirm that we will keep watching every action of our Government on this issue.

But more than anything, what is needed now is the emergence of true friends, not only of East Timor, but also of Indonesia. In spite of appearances, I humbly doubt that Japan has not been a true friend of Indonesia. When, as a friend, it should have asked restraint, it looked the other way. When it should have encouraged honesty, it participated in perpetuating falsehoods. I am afraid that true friendship cannot be built on such a cynical foundation.

Japan's heavy economic investment in Indonesia is sometimes supposed to be the reason which explains Japan's unprincipled position on the East Timor issue. In terms of Japan's official development aid, Indonesia is the largest recipient country in the world. From the

Indonesian point of view, Japan is the largest economic aid donor country. But there must not be any doubt in anyone's mind that Japanese tax payers are willing to contribute, however indirectly, to the subjugation of the people of East Timor. I believe that it is this extremely heavy investment in Indonesia that urges us to put the political and diplomatic relationship between our two nations on a sound basis, settling the East Timor issue in accordance with justice.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I thank you again for this opportunity and assure you of the commitment of myself and my colleagues in the Japanese Diet to work for a just settlement of the East Timor issue.

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